

# Genetic Park: a Tribute

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*Written and Edited by PgFalcon*

*Inspired by TGFWriter's and MaLAgua's similarly titled works of fiction*

"Nervous?" asks a tall, black haired twenty-year-old-frat-boy next to me. His toothy grin is a permanent fixture to his face.

"Nervous? Me?" I say, trying to smile back. It comes across as a grimace.

"He's nervous," he states with a confident chuckle, reclining in his seat and stretching his arms even as the helicopter shakes violently from a sudden gust of wind.

"Sorry folks," says the pilot, glancing back in the cabin. "Turbulent today."

"Stop teasing him Tobias," says a girl sitting across from me, her legs crossed modestly. She pushes small wire-frame glasses up her nose and tosses a wisp of long brown hair out of her face all in a single fluid motion. Her name is Jennifer, or Jenny.

I groan despite myself. I dislike flying.

In fact, I dislike this whole vacation. My three best friends are loony, and I'm loony for letting them get talk me into this. Already I regret coming.

"How much longer?" I ask nobody in particular.

"I think we're getting ready to land," answers my very good friend Charlie, sitting next to me. Our stomachs lurch as we drop several feet rather suddenly. Charlie is a seven foot tall giant with long, curly hair that brushes the padded ceiling of the helicopter. The pilot tries to correct for air conditions, but it's a tough job flying through this wind-tunnel. I resume looking through the window.

We're surrounded by rock. Cliffs extend upwards in every direction, and we've been flying through what appears to be a canyon for the past couple of minutes. A sudden updraft, followed immediately by another downdraft causes me to grip my armrests so hard that my knuckles turn white. Watching the window, though, we do appear to going lower and lower.

The big white helicopter gracefully turns around a bend in the canyon, which opens up into a small valley. I catch a glimpse of a small white-walled facility of some sorts up ahead before we finish

the turn: the big building a stark contrast to the jungle that surrounds it. Quite suddenly everything stops shaking, and the cabin noise dissipates. We all breathe out small sighs of relief.

“Please remain seated for approach,” says the pilot.

The landing is smooth as silk, especially in comparison to the flight over. The second we feel the landing-gear touch down we all unbuckle and stretch. The hatch opens, and we’re greeted by a cheerful toucan standing five feet tall and wearing nothing but a shady safari hat and a clipboard.

“Welcome to Genetic Park!” says the toucan merrily. Judging by its voice I’m guessing female. Otherwise it’s impossible to tell.

We all clamor out the door. The four of us ended up sharing the cabin with four other tourists, and we separate out on the helipad. Looking around I see eight other helipads lined up in front of the big building we landed next to, and already another helicopter is landing, and another taking off. Several others appear to be on standby.

“Smooth operation you got here,” says Charlie, addressing our guide.

“Yes,” says the toucan with a beaky grin, “We try to maintain efficiency for the comfort of our guests. Right this way if you please.”

She turns and heads towards the building, and we follow.

“Up ahead is one of several entrances to Genetic Park,” says our guide to those closest to her as we walk the long concrete pathway to the front doors. While they looked small from the air, as we get closer I see they’re actually pretty big. In fact, I realize that I grossly underestimated the size of the building as well. I anticipate a lot of walking.

The toucan turns around and starts talking and walking backwards at the same time, using that painfully cheerful carnival-ride voice.

“Everyone please gather close so that everybody can hear... can everyone hear me okay? Great! Okay everybody! Before we begin, I need to reiterate the ground rules that you read on the flight over. Genetics Inc. is not responsible for any lost or stolen property while vacationing at Genetic Park. There will be no opportunities to charge electronic devices, and Genetic Park has no internet access or cellular towers! Damage to non-regulation clothing is highly likely, and can also potentially injure or entangle you, so it is required that you wear the special leotards that will be given to you in the changing rooms for the duration of your individual transformations! It is highly recommended that you place all of your personal belongings in one of our safe and secure storage lockers, which will be in the changing rooms to your right and left! All expenses have been paid, and there will be no need for wallets or identification, as everything on the island utilizes biometrics!

“Should any of you decide at any time that you want to leave Genetic Park early, simply return to this out-post or any of the seven others like it scattered around the island and you will receive fast and prompt deactivation service, after which all changes to your bodies will revert quickly and safely! Any questions? No? Follow me!”

Our guide then turns, opens the double doors to Genetic Park with a push that sends them swinging open, and strides in.

Inside it is a bustle of activity. Another group of tourists just like ours is being led around a corner in front of us by what appears to be sheep. We follow a good distance behind them, as the floor space is impressive. Men and women in white lab-coats walk back and forth, carrying data pads and pushing carts. Most of them are human. Some are not.

Around the corner are stairs and we head down them.

“We’ll be using changing room number 23 today! It’s not far: it’s just down this hall to the left!”

The toucan turns around as she reaches a steel door labeled with a big, red number 23. It slides open after she gives a quick retinal scan, and she waits for us all to enter before she follows and the door closes.

“Alrighty! Women go to the door on the left, and men go to the right. You’ll all find your leotards in the lockers along the walls (one size fits all)! You don’t need to bother to remember the number should you wish to store any belongings in them for the duration of your stay, as they don’t have any numbers to remember. They will record your biometric patterns and save it to the locker, which you can retrieve from anywhere on the island should you decide to leave via another outpost. If you want to leave the island from *this* outpost, it will of course still be accessible here as well. When you are finished changing clothes step through the next door, which will be painted yellow, to receive your injections before being released onto the island! Further instructions will be given after the injections as to where you might go, but these are only suggestions. Feel free to roam about and do as you please! Enjoy your stay at Genetic Park!”

“Finally!” says Tobias, and is first through the door. Jessy waves goodbye as we split up. Me and Charlie follow Tobias.

Past the doors I’m surprised to find myself in a locker-room just like any you’d find in a gym, although much smaller. It even smells vaguely of chlorine and disinfectant. I walk over to a locker, and after a quick retinal scan and hand-print combo it pops open. Inside is a skin-tight elastic one-piece. Looking at it I wonder silently who might have worn this before me, and hope it was cleaned well. I

undress, toss my crap in the locker seeing as I won't be needing any of it, and slip into the suit. It's cool and silky to the skin, and rather revealing. Tobias and Charlie both don't seem to have a problem with it, so I pretend to be confident about how I look and walk with them to the next door. They're grinning from ear to ear in anticipation. I'm already counting the seconds until we leave.

The next door leads to a very bright room, and here we join back up with Jessy. An intercom harshly comes to life.

"To choose your new, temporary, form please utilize one of the kiosks along the walls, and when you've made your selection place your arm into the cuff and press the green button."

We all sit down at an empty kiosk, and touch the screen to begin.

*Welcome to Genetic Park's morphological database! Before making your selection we ask you to remember that this kiosk is stationed in Forest/Jungle terrain, and that certain animals may be more comfortable in this climate than others. Please choose your class of animal to begin.*

I choose mammal.

*Please choose an order of mammals.*

I choose carnivoria.

*Please choose a family of carnivores.*

I stare at the screen. Fuck it, I'm too lazy to go through this. I back up to the beginning and hit randomize. The screen then invites me to "please push the green button to confirm".

There we go! Much faster. I jam my arm into the sleeve and whack the green button. I feel a slight pinch, then withdraw my arm. Done and done.

I walk over to the exit and stand there like an idiot for the next twenty minutes as everyone else agonizes over what animal they should choose.

I'm ready to start banging my head on the door from sheer boredom when we're all ready to leave and have had our injections. We all leave through the next door and find Jenny already waiting for us. Her leotard is just as revealing as ours, perhaps even more so, and I try not to blush as I glance away. We all start walking down the only exit, a narrow tunnel that appears to be hundreds of feet long.

"I can't wait!" says Charlie. "I am totally gonna dig being part wolf! I can't wait!"

“I know what you mean,” agrees Tobias. Bright fluorescent bulbs pass by overhead every few feet. A static voice in the speaker system repeats over and over for us to keep walking until we reach day-light.

“I was gonna go with a crocodile,” Tobias continues, “but I totally changed my mind at the last minute when I saw snakes! Aren’t they supposed to have heat-vision, or something like that?”

“Well,” says Jenny. “It’s not so much vision as it’s a sixth sense, but yes. What type of snake did you chose?”

“King cobra, what else?” says Tobias.

“Awesome,” says Charlie with a fist-bump. “What’d you chose then Jenny?”

“Snowy Owl. You know they’re my favorite.”

“Awesome.”

“What about you?” Charlie asks me. “What’d you decide?”

“Just hit the random button,” I mumble, not terribly excited about any of this.

Jaws drop.

“No way dude, that takes balls,” says Tobias. “What if you end up a crappy animal?”

“They’re all the same in the end,” I say back with a shrug. “And you know how I am about Zen, so whatever.”

“Balls dude,” repeats Tobias, shaking his head as if he couldn’t imagine why I would do such a thing.

The end of the tunnel is close, and it’s rather bright outside. The ground turns from cement to dirt as we exit the outpost, and my bare feet are grateful. Waiting for us is a koala morph wearing a Hawaiian t-shirt and sandals. No pants, but then again he’s so fuzzy he doesn’t really need them.

“Hey folks! You four a group?”

“Yup,” says Tobias in confirmation, speaking for all of us.

“Good for you guys! Behind me here is a dirt path. If you follow it about four miles down the road you’ll find a lodge for the night. That lodge is also a major intersection of more walk-paths to other

near-by areas and activities. If this is your first time at Genetic Park, I highly recommend stopping by there to adjust. If you want to leave the jungle area you can travel via zip-line.”

“Do they serve food there?” asks Charlie. “I’m starving.”

“Oh, that’s just an effect of the first stages of transformation. After hunger, you may experience hot and cold flashes, as well as anxiety, sleeplessness, and hyperactivity. Changes are time dependent on many variables, but may be as quick as an hour or take as long as six. You shouldn’t feel any pain or serious discomfort during the process.”

“Sounds good,” says Tobias in a fake Texan accent, just to be goofy. “Let’s head it up and move on out!”

And so we begin our march down the dirt road as noon approaches.

“Jeez, what is this place a bug factory?” asks Tobias only ten minutes later. “And when are we gonna start changing?”

“Just be patient,” says Jenny, swatting flies herself.

“Yeah,” I agree. “A watched pot never boils.”

“Diggin’ that wisdom there Ken,” says Charlie.

“Can’t beat the classics,” I say as I slap my neck. Whose idea was it to start at the jungle habitat?

“Perhaps we should move on to a less sweaty part of the island when we get to wherever this place is,” says Jenny, reading my mind and wiping her forehead with her sleeve. “I’d like to visit the snowy peaks later. I don’t think my owl will be well suited to this weather.”

“I don’t think a wolf will mind it,” says Charlie with a laugh, raising his hands to form claws and mock-growling. “But I’m game for the snow after.”

“Isn’t snow bad for snakes?” asks Tobias with a devil-may-care laugh. To him it must sound like a dare or challenge.

“I’ll probably be fine whatever I end up turning into,” I say moodily.

“Aw, cheer up Kenny!” says Tobias, falling back and slapping me on the back. “Don’t be such a downer. What in the world would you rather be doing right now anyway?”

“Not getting eaten to death by bugs,” I answer, slapping my arms again. My skin feels like its crawling.

Tobias seems to look at me funny though.

“Dude! You’re totally changing already!” he shouts, and everybody else gathers round to look at me, all excited to finally see something happen.

“What?” I ask as all of them stare at my face.

“You’re totally getting all fuzzy,” answers Jenny. “Your entire face is fuzzy.”

“I think his arms are too!” says Charlie, excited. I hold up my hands and see that he’s right, a soft peach-fuzzy layer of very thick tan and brown fur is growing on basically my entire body now. I touch my face and it’s the same story.

“What do you think he’s gonna turn into?” Charlie continues, staring at me in wonder.

“Well,” says Jenny. “He’s getting furry, so some sort of mammal. I can’t say more than that right now...”

“DUDES!” shouts Tobias, “check me out!”

And with that all eyes turn to Tobias, and I breathe a sigh of relief.

Tobias is holding out his hands, and a diamond pattern is clearly visible on the back of them. His skin has also turned slightly black, and will probably only get blacker until it’s the same color as the scales of a king cobra.

“This is so crazy cool!” he says, turning his hands over and over to look at them.

And very quickly Jenny and Charlie both notice small changes in themselves as well, and everybody becomes self-absorbed in their own transformations as we keep right on walking along the path, each of them narrating their own changes, but none of them listening to each other.

“I’m growing pin-feathers!” squeals Jenny excitedly.

“I’ve got a scale on my hand dudes! An actual snake scale! And here’s another one!”

“I’m totally craving dog-food right now.”

I watch them all bemusedly when I notice that my nose has changed shape somewhat. It's gotten broader, and flatter, and fuzzier. What was initially just thick fuzz all over my body has progressed to rapidly lengthening fur. I'm distracted by all of this when pressure begins to build up in my face as I feel invisible forces attempting to push my jaw and nose outwards.

At first it's only mildly uncomfortable, but it quickly progresses to moderately painful until my entire face starts reshaping with loud cracks and pops and my face slowly begins to slide outwards and my bones stretching along with my skin.

I don't say anything, but I thought this process was supposed to be painless. I grin and bear it. I must look pretty freaky.

But it seems that the transformation is only getting started. Sharp spikes of pain shoot through my teeth as I feel them lengthening, changing shape, and growing in my mouth. My skull continues to grind painfully as it forcefully changes shape, and I think my entire head is actually getting bigger. My tongue flattens inside my mouth, and becomes much longer. My eyes are suddenly killing me and a sharp ringing fills my ears as they relocate from the side of my head to the top, growing round and furry as well. My lips curl both in part due to the painful changes accelerating all over my body, as well as the fact that they too are changing. Pointed teeth and razor sharp canines half the length of a human finger flash whitely in my mouth. I suppress a growl of anger as more pain propagates across my body, and take a calming breath. All things come to pass. So will this.

And now other changes begin taking place in earnest. My bones suddenly ache like nobody's business as I can feel them change shape and move around, and they seem to be growing heavier as well. My muscles feel as though they're crawling as they too become bigger and stronger. Whatever I'm becoming must be a carnivore. I look down at my bicep and watch it grow strong and powerful. I feel as though I'm growing a little bit taller too... but also leaner.

My thoughts are again distracted though as my hands cramp up and begin to deform, along with my legs and feet, changing shape so much that they could hardly be said to be hands or feet anymore. They're becoming much too paw-like, although I do still have thumbs. Flexing my shortened digits I realize suddenly that I have very sharp and wicked looking claws that extend and retract when I flex the tips of my fingers, a sudden feeling of power causing me to shudder. I'll need to be careful with these.

Fur+carnivore+retractable claws = cat, and a big cat at that. I notice as I'm thinking this that my lip has split, and I now have long whiskers too. My vision has become rather sharp, and I notice things seem to move a little slower than they should. Movement is also catching my eye like a magnet as I can't stop myself from glancing at every tiny movement around me. I find myself wanting to chase after everyone's legs.

My big cat theory is only further confirmed, as well as interrupted, as a thick, powerful tail practically explodes out of my ass it grows so fast, sliding down my pant-leg in a most uncomfortable fashion. Oh, and did I mention that it hurt so bad that I nearly screamed as it did this?

Deep breath.

I feel around behind me, prepared to tear the hell out of this leotard if I need to, when I realize there's a sizable hole in the back much like the fly in men's underwear, obviously designed to accommodate a tail. I carefully pull my new tail through, and only now do I notice the color pattern in my growing fur. Tan with brown markings, and the fur on my arms and hands is similarly marked, but with white fur on my underarms and palms. My tail is thick and long with tan fur and a dark brown tip, and is rooted securely to my spine. I look down the neck of my leotard and see that my chest and underbelly is white as well. I pluck a hair from my chin, curiously noting as I do that soft paw-pads have grown on the heels of my hands and balls of my feet, as well as my fingertips and toes. They're very tough and supple, like soft, warm leather. I look at the hair I plucked and it's white as well. I'm definitely going to need to see a mirror when we get wherever it is we're going.

Well, that finally narrows it all down to only one possibility. I'm turning into a cougar.

Coolio.

And then my spine follows suit with my tail as dozens of shockingly painful pops and cracks catch me off guard. My spine extends, lengthening my body to accommodate the new form I'm acquiring, but surprisingly I feel like I'm smaller than I used to be, though I become a little taller again as my ankles tension up and I'm raised forcibly up onto the balls of my feet as I make the final transition into digitigrade, and somehow I've put on a serious amount of toned muscle too. I've become incredibly furry, so much so that the leotard has become exceedingly uncomfortable and tight, despite how smooth and breathable the fabric is, the fabric stretching easily to fit my changing body. It doesn't change the fact that is smashing down my fur in a very uncomfortable way and beginning to annoy me. I take one more deep breath and let it out.

Things that are, are. Don't worry about it. This trial is as transient as a summer's breeze. It will pass.

My face feels like it has finished changing for the most part, and the pain all over my body has begun to dissipate. My insides gurgle and clench unpleasantly as they are finishing sliding and moving around, but other than that I'm now part mountain lion.

With mountain lion instincts, and mountain lion power, and mountain lion senses.

I swear I could smell a pizza from a mile away right now, if there were any pizza in the vicinity that is. I can also hear the changes that are only just now starting to speed up in my friends, and I glance around to watch them all change.

Jennifer is covered in white feathers, and is desperately attempting to stuff very large wings through two more conveniently placed openings in the back of her leotard. I rush over to help her, trying to ignore the way her breast moves as she tries to reach behind her.

“Let me help,” I say quickly, and she turns around for me. It doesn’t take more than a few seconds for me to help her enormous wings through the slots, after which she fully extends them, signing with relief, and then carefully learns how to fold them back against her back. They’re easily twelve feet long each. Her feathers are all ruffled up though, as I imagine my fur is too underneath this leotard.

Jenny’s nose and mouth are molding into a dainty looking beak, and her eyes have increased dramatically in size. Her entire neck turns on a pivot to watch me smooth out her primaries.

“Thanks,” she says, her voice slightly airy now, but essentially unaltered. Her hands and feet have become clawed talons.

“No problem,” I say by way of answer, and turn around to see if Tobias or Charlie need help too, but she taps me on the shoulder so I turn back around.

“Can you help me just a little more?” she asks with a bashful glance at the ground behind her, and I look down to see that her tail and tail-feathers have gotten all bunched up in the seat of her pants. It looks uncomfortable, and I immediately set to help pulling her tail through the tail-slot as well, but it involves touching her butt.

I just blush and try to ignore it.

After that though, her changes seem to be well underway and I turn to see Charlie already having pulled his own wagging tail out of the leotard and turning circles over and over to look at it, and Tobias who has fallen over as his legs no longer exist, a rapidly lengthening tail having replaced them trailing out of one tightly stretched leg-hole.

“A little help?” he asks, after a few more seconds of flailing around on the ground, trying to push himself out of the dirt. I can’t tell if he’s grinning or not due to his now extremely reptilian face, but I assume that he is.

As I reach down to help him up his tongue comes dashing out of his mouth nearly an entire foot, a purple color and forked at the end.

“Duuuuude,” he says as I grab him under his arms and lift him up onto my back. His skin feels like soft, dry leather. He’s covered in thousands of diamond shaped black scales.

I quickly catch back up with the others, who have slowed nearly to a crawl as they stare, fascinated, at their bodies as they continue to change. None of them seems to be experiencing any of the pain that I felt, so that’s good. Maybe I got a defective injection?

“I can totally taste the air Kenny,” he says, his tongue whipping past my face. I roll my eyes. His neck is lengthening considerably, and his head slowly extends past mine.

Then he seems to notice what I’ve already become.

“Oh man! You’re totally a cat!! Hey guys! Check Ken out! He’s a cat!!”

“Cool,” say both Charlie and Jenny absent mindedly. They’re both still a decent ways off from being done with the transformation, and so is Tobias even as I carry him. Despite the fact that he looks like he weighs a ton, he doesn’t feel that heavy, and his tail is getting longer and more muscled by the moment, dragging behind us through the dirt and grass.

“How am I supposed to walk like this?” Tobias asks, hissing in my ear.

“How should I know?” I say with a shrug. “Slither I suppose?”

“Not a bad idea at all! Let me down so I can try it.”

So I let go of him, and he nearly falls face first in the dirt again, but this time catches himself by flexing the muscles in his abdomen and using his tail as counterweight. It looks like from the bellybutton down he’s a *very* large snake, and from the waste up he’s turning into a crazy lizard-man. His eyes no longer look very human, but his mannerisms make up for all lost facial expression. Surprisingly, very little about him seems to have changed significantly despite the drastic cosmetic alterations.

He wiggles his tail again, and then tries hopping forward, neither with much success.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he says, growing irritated, but right after he says that he starts making s-curves with his muscled tail and belly, and all of a sudden he’s moving forward. He quickly stops trying to hold himself so high in the air and finds that he moves even faster when more of him is on the ground.

“Ha! Not so hard after all,” he says triumphantly. The others have wandered farther ahead of us again, but we catch back up to them quickly. Charlie seems to have taken straight to his transformation, and looks just like you might expect a werewolf to look like... if werewolf’s acted like hyperactive puppies. His shaggy grey pelt is bunched up under the leotard as well.

"I can smell EVERYTHING!" he shouts giddily as we jog/slither up behind him, turning and grabbing me up in a man-hug. He's as big as he's ever been, and now I find myself eye level with his pecks.

"Yea yea, calm down there Cujo," I say, prying his arms from my head.

I feel my strange new muscles flex easily, and find it all too simple a task to remove Charlie from me. I feel... powerful.

"Wow," says Jenny, staring up at me with her big, round eyes. "You got muscles! And you're... shorter?"

"What's a puma?" asks Tobias, but nobody answers him.

"Yea," I say, scratching the back of my head uncomfortably as once again everyone is looking at me.

Uncomfortable silence.

"Well... should we keep going?" I ask. "I'm freaking starving."

Is something different about my voice? Mildly distracted and disconcerted I then take a step forward, trip on a tree root, and land on my hands and feet with all the grace of a cat getting snuck up on. I let out an echoing yowl of surprise, which causes all of my friends to leap back from me in surprise.

Well, now I'm greatly disconcerted. I'm on my hands and feet, but it doesn't really feel like I'm actually on my hands and feet. It feels more natural than standing up did.

"Woah... I am so doing random button next time," says Tobias with a wicked grin, sliding up next to me. Now he's over two feet taller than me because I'm so low to the ground and he's lifted himself back up to eye level with Jenny. I feel... way too comfortable on all fours.

"You think I can do that?" asks Charlie, falling forward to run around on his hands and feet. He looks ridiculous as he romps around with his butt way up in the air as he tries to figure out how I did whatever it was that I did.

Because for all intents and purposes there is practically no substantial difference between me and a real cougar when I'm standing like this. I'm obviously capable of bipedal locomotion and of course I'm able to speak, but there is no doubt that I am much more animal-like than my friends are right now. Did I get a different type of injection? I find the fact that I've come to that conclusion twice now a little disturbing.

I take a cautious step forward, followed by another, and everything feels so natural and easy. Charlie finally gives up trying to figure out what I did and stands back up, brushing dirt from his hands and turning back to look at me funny.

I push back off the ground and stand back up, and quite suddenly I look much more human. My stance changes altogether, and once more I appear to look like I should: just another anthro animal on an island full of anthro animals.

“Dude...” says Tobias.

“Seriously, I’m starving guys,” I say to change topic. I hate being in the spotlight. “Don’t make me eat one of you.”

And I think they all took my joke as a serious threat because they all immediately got moving with me. Walking on two legs feels much more normal, but somehow when I was low to the ground like I was before it felt... nice. I have to resist the urge to fall forward again, since I know it will spark the topic of my unusual morph, and for now everyone seems to have forgotten about it already.

How the hell do I let them talk me into these things?

It isn’t much farther until Charlie starts sniffing and snuffing the air.

“Ohhhhh.... I smell cheeseburgers,” he says with a whine.

I sniff the air too, and open my mouth a little to let the air flow over my palate. I lick my lips, temporarily appreciating that my tongue is long enough to run over my big nose and whiskers, and growl in pleasure, the noise coming much more naturally than it used to.

“That smells wonderful,” I moan. “To quote Simba, I’m so hungry I could eat a whole zebra.”

“Simba was a lion,” says Charlie next to me, drooling from the smell. “Not a puma.”

“Mountain lion, lion... what’s the difference really?” I say back, slugging him in the shoulder and nearly knocking him over.

“I think I can smell it too,” says Jenny, lifting her beak into the wind.

“I can’t smell hardly anything.” says Tobias disappointedly.

“Stick your tongue out,” says Jenny helpfully.

“Oh, like this?” says Tobias, and proceeds to make a face at her with his long forked tongue, only to suck it back into his mouth a second later with a surprised expression.

“Oh,” he says as he tastes food on the air.

“Yea, snakes mainly use the tips of their tongue to smell things,” adds Jenny.

“Well then, lets hurry!” he says excitedly, speeding up.

It turns out that the source of the smell is actually a good ways farther up the road than we thought. I guess we weren’t quite used to our new superhuman senses of smell, because I could’ve sworn that the food had to be around each and every bend in the road.

But after twenty minutes or so of practically sprinting to find this mythical feast in the forest we finally find it.

A building built like an enormous log cabin looms up from behind the next hill, and it is from there that the delicious smells are originating. Grey smoke furls from multiple chimneys.

But it’s more than that. Up ahead, walking around the building and eating at picnic tables, are more anthros.

Charlie runs up to the nearest one: a kid that looks like he might be a ferret, or something along those lines. He’s eating a hotdog and it smells like heaven. I’ve never been this hungry.

“Hey dude, where’d you get the dog?” asks Charlie.

“Not dog, ferret,” says the kid with his mouth full, and giggles at his own joke. “You’re a dog though,” he adds after looking Charlie up and down.

“Where’d you get the food kid?” I ask, stepping up. He glances up at me as if noticing me for the first time, and nearly drops the wiener.

“Over there ma’am,” he says, gesturing to the log cabin structure. “Right through those doors is an enormous buffet.”

“Thanks!” I say as we all immediately push past him and race for the door.

But wait... why'd he call me ma'am? Must be his idea of a joke or something, or maybe he's just stupid.

But I forget the kid as we open the doors to a buffet of heavenly American cuisine.

Pizza, burgers, fries, hotdogs, mozzarella sticks, onion rings, fried chicken, and just about every other kind of fast-food is being mass-produced by a team of cooks and devoured by hundreds of people all talking and eating together. We push through the crowd of fur, scales, and feathers and each start loading up a tray.

"Oh my god it all smells freaking incredible!" cries Charlie as he carries his loaded tray to a table, with me right behind him. Tobias and Jenny are only just sitting down with their plates when I've already devoured two trays heaped with food, and Charlie is eating like a wolf himself, unsurprisingly.

I could almost cry it all tastes so good. I've never been so hungry in all my life. I inhale one hamburger after another and chase it all down with what must be gallons of cola. It takes forever for me to begin to be satisfied, but when I do I slow down and resume paying attention to my surroundings.

"... this the best food you ever eaten?" says Charlie, stuffing yet another mustard coated hotdog down his throat, then licks his nose clean of a spot of ketchup. "And how cool is all this? This is the best money I have ever spent."

"This food is really tasty," agrees Jenny, swallowing a buffalo wing, bones and all.

"How can you taste it if you don't chew your food?" asks Charlie with his mouth full.

"I don't know. I just know it tastes good," answers Jenny, delicately swallowing another wing. She licks some sauce off of the long claws of her taloned hand, her tongue small and pointed. "And speaking of not chewing, are you okay there Tobias?"

Tobias nods his head, still in the process of swallowing a double quarter pounder in one bite. His neck swells in size as the food travels down to his belly ever so slowly. He had to unhinge his jaw to accomplish the feat, and is now only just now finding out how to put his face back together.

"Nggguh! Whoa! Did you guys see that?"

"We saw it Tobias," says Jenny, grinning as she watches him pick up another hamburger to do it all again. She rests her chin on her talon in bemusement.

I pick up a leg of fried chicken and eat it to keep my hands busy. I'm not really hungry anymore. When I'm done I lick the grease from my fingers and fur. My tongue is really, really long and has very handy barbs on it that work like a comb on my fur. I also find that tongue cleaning myself is very

pleasant-feeling. Evolutionary incentive for cats to groom themselves I guess. I pick up another leg of chicken.

“Dang Ken, you’ve eaten as much as all of us combined,” observes Charlie sitting next to me.

I have five trays stacked on top of one another in front of me, along with a small mound of bones.

“It’s good food,” I answer, nibbling the last of the meat from the bone and adding it to the pile. I pick up another chicken leg.

“So what do we do first?” I ask.